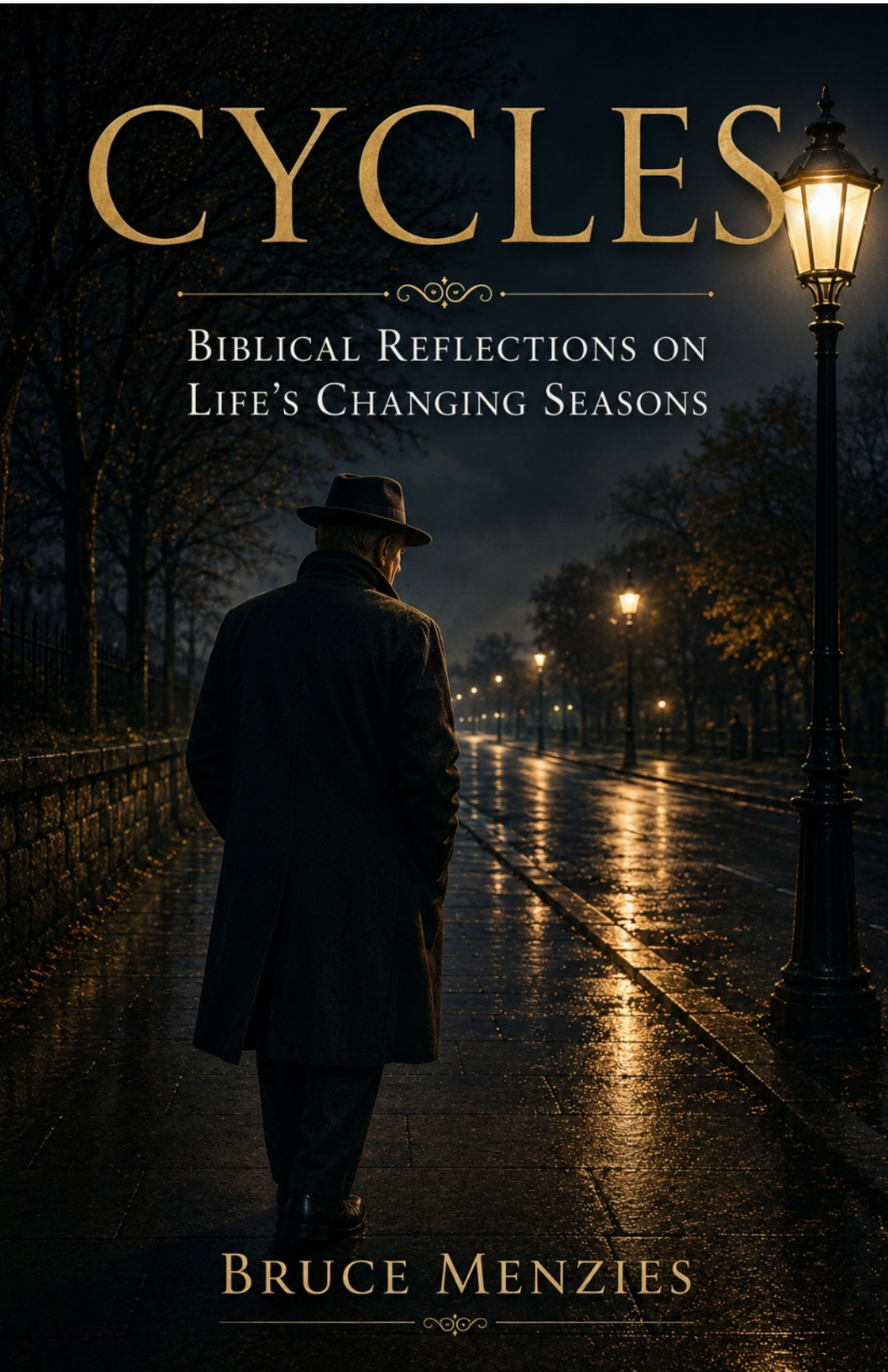
CYCLES
Biblical Reflections on
Life's Changing Seasons
Bruce Menzies

CYCLES

Biblical Reflections on Life's Changing Seasons

Bruce Menzies

©2026 by Bruce Menzies
All rights reserved
ISBN:
Contact the author at bjmenzies@msn.com

This booklet was written with the assistance of an AI-based writing tool, which helped refine language and structure along the way. The historical exploration, spiritual reflection, and creative narrative, however, remain my own.

Text has been typeset in Baskerville typeface 11/16.
Outdenting has been used for optimal justification.
Image on the front cover was created specifically for this booklet.

One the cover: A solitary figure in a raincoat walks away on a street lit by warm gas lamps, reflecting a mood of quiet introspection amidst life's cycles.

BASILICA
IMPRINT

Frank Sinatra (1915–1998)
Whose 1968 recording of "Cycles" inspired the reflections in this booklet.

This booklet was inspired by the song "Cycles," written by Gayle Caldwell and recorded by Mr. Frank Sinatra in July, 1968. The author gratefully acknowledges the creative work that inspired these reflections. Portions of the lyrics from the song are quoted herein for the sole purpose of brief commentary, analysis, and spiritual reflection. This booklet is a non-commercial, personal publication distributed for educational and reflective purposes under Fair Use guidelines. All rights to the underlying musical work remain the property of the copyright holders.

To my parents,
Homer and Martha Menzies,
Faithful servants of God.

The Changing of the Seasons

In the autumn of 1968, Frank Sinatra stepped into a Los Angeles recording studio and delivered a song that stood in stark contrast to the brassy, defiant anthems that came to define his later career. The song was "Cycles," written by Gayle Caldwell. It lacked the soaring bravado of "My Way" or the swinging confidence of "New York, New York." Instead, it offered something far more valuable: a quiet, acoustic, and deeply honest reflection on the human condition.

"Cycles" is a song about resilience. It acknowledges that life is rarely a straight line of unbroken victories; rather, it is a series of peaks and valleys, of seasons that change whether we are ready for them or not. We all experience moments of being "down and out," times when the instinct to pull the covers over our heads feels overwhelming.

Yet, the brilliance of the song lies in its refusal to stay in the dark. It reminds us that just as winter must inevitably yield to the warmth of spring, our present hardships are not permanent destinations.

This short booklet is an invitation to explore those inevitable rhythms of life. Over the next four brief chapters, we will look at the lyrical journey of "Cycles" alongside timeless narratives of faith, beginning with a king who knew the depths of the valley all too well. For no matter how heavy the current season may feel, the story is never truly over. The clock keeps ticking, the earth keeps turning, and tomorrow always brings something new.

Chapter 1

Winter Gives Way to Spring—David

"So I'm down and so I'm out / But so are many others
So I feel like trying to hide my head 'neath these covers
Life is like the seasons / After winter comes the spring
So I'll keep this smile awhile / And see what tomorrow brings"

There is a profound, messy honesty in admitting that you want to hide. When the weight of circumstances presses down, pulling the covers over your head isn't just a physical urge; it is a spiritual defense mechanism. It is the desire to vanish from a reality that has grown too heavy to bear.

Long before Frank Sinatra sang those lines in a California studio, a young shepherd turned warrior named David lived them out in the Judean wilderness.

David was a man intimately acquainted with life's brutal downswings. He went from the high-flying triumph of defeating Goliath and hearing the crowds chant his name, to suddenly being hunted like an animal by a jealous, paranoid King Saul. In a matter of moments, his world fractured. He lost his position at court, his safety, and his regular connection to his family.

We often see David in the isolated "winter" of his life—quite literally hiding his head inside the dark, damp caves of Adullam and En Gedi. In the raw poetry of his prayers, David didn't mince words about the darkness closing in. He wrote openly about his heart being overwhelmed. Like anyone facing a harsh emotional winter, he felt the biting chill of rejection, fear, and profound heartbreak.

Yet, David's story didn't end in the cave. The beauty of his faith—and the core truth of the song's opening stanza—is the recognition that winter is a season, not a permanent landscape. David understood that the same

God who commands the physical seasons also governs the cycles of human life. He allowed himself to feel the sting of the cold, but he refused to believe that the frost would last forever.

He captured this eternal truth beautifully in the twilight of his struggles, writing: *"For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning"* (Ps 30:5).

Off the cave floor, David would eventually rise, dust himself off, and choose to "keep a smile awhile." He looked past the immediate darkness of the cave entrance, trusting that the night of weeping would inevitably give way to the joy of a new day.

When we find ourselves under the covers, paralyzed by our own seasons of disappointment, David's life reminds us of a fundamental rule of reality: winter always has an expiration date. Spring is coming, and tomorrow brings the quiet promise of a brand-new morning.

Prayerful Thought

Lord, when I find myself hidden away in the quiet, forgotten valleys of life, help me to remember that You are actively shaping my heart for the future. Teach me to trust Your timing and rest securely in the shelter of Your presence.

Chapter 2

Dreams Yet Unfulfilled—Joseph

"I've been told and I believe / That life is meant for living
And even when my chips are low / There's still some left for giving
I've been many places / Maybe not as far as you
So I think I'll stay awhile / And see if some dreams come true"

It is easy to believe that life is meant for living when the sun is shining and your pockets are full. It is an entirely different matter to hold onto that belief when you are staring at a bare hand and your "chips are low." The true test of character is not what we do in times of abundance, but whether we still find something left to give when we have been stripped of everything–like Joseph.

As a young man, Joseph was a dreamer, envisioned by God for grand leadership. But the cycle of his life took a sudden, catastrophic downturn. Betrayed by his envious brothers, cast into a pit, and sold into Egyptian servitude, his grand dreams seemed to shatter before they ever began. Later, falsely accused by Potiphar's wife, he found himself languishing in the darkness of a royal dungeon.

By any human standard, Joseph's chips were at an all-time low. He was trapped in a foreign land, forgotten and isolated. Yet, even in the bleakness of that prison, Joseph refused to fold. He believed his life was still meant for living. When he noticed the downcast faces of the King's imprisoned butler and baker, he didn't withdraw into his own misery. Instead, he reached out, using his God-given gift to interpret their dreams. Even with meager chips, he still had something left for giving.

Joseph's long, grueling wait in the dungeon was a masterclass in what the Apostle Paul would later pen: *"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope"* (Rom 5:3–4).

The prison did not break Joseph; it built him. His tribulations worked a deep, unshakeable patience within his soul. He had been to many low places, but he chose to "stay awhile" in faithful endurance, holding onto the conviction that the Architect of his dreams had not forgotten him.

When our own dreams seem entirely unfulfilled and our circumstances look like a prison sentence, Joseph's journey challenges us. We can choose to look around, find someone else to serve, and wait with patient hope. For in the economy of God, the dungeon is often just the necessary prologue to the palace.

Prayerful Thought

Heavenly Father, keep my faith steadfast when the promises You have placed in my heart seem distant or entirely lost, Grant me the patience to endure the waiting seasons, knowing that You are working all things together for good.

Chapter 3

Lessons From the Foolish Years—Solomon

"There isn't much that I have learned
Through all my foolish years
Except that life keeps runnin' in cycles
First there's laughter, then those tears"

There is a unique kind of wisdom that only comes through the rearview mirror of our own mistakes. We often spend our youth chasing a mirage of permanent happiness, convinced we can outrun sorrow. But the passing of time is a ruthless teacher. Eventually, we all look back on our own "foolish years" and arrive at a sobering, universal truth: life refuses to stay in one place. It keeps running in cycles, constantly shifting between the highs of laughter and the lows of tears.

King Solomon learned this truth on a grander scale than perhaps anyone else in history.

Solomon possessed unmatched wisdom, unfathomable wealth, and absolute power. Yet, as he grew older, he embarked on a series of foolish detours. He sought fulfillment in every earthly pleasure imaginable—building massive monuments, accumulating vast fortunes, and indulging every whim of the flesh. He tasted the pinnacle of human success and worldly laughter.

Yet, the book of Ecclesiastes reads like a melancholic diary written after the music has stopped. It reflects a profound sadness and a heavy, hard-won realism. Solomon discovered that chasing after the wind only leads to tears of disappointment and the sting of betrayal.

Through his disillusionment, Solomon recognized the inevitable rhythms of the human experience, penning these famous words in the King James Version: *"A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance"* (Ecc 3:4).

He realized that trying to force life to be an endless party is a fool's errand. The laughter and the tears are bound together in the same cycle. But this realization didn't lead Solomon to despair; instead, it stripped away his arrogance and brought him to a place of ultimate humility and dependence on the Almighty.

At the very end of his reflections, after sorting through all the vanity of his foolish years, Solomon brought the grand cycle of life down to its absolute, unchanging anchor: *"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man"* (Ecc 12:13).

Our foolish years are rarely pleasant in reproduction, but they serve a divine purpose. They teach us that worldly success is fleeting, that tears are inevitable, and that our only true stability is found in the One who sits above the cycles of time.

Prayerful Thought

Lord, forbid that I should waste my years chasing the hollow vanities of this passing world. Grant me the wisdom to anchor my soul only in what is eternal, finding my true purpose and fulfillment in You alone.

Chapter 4

When the Bottom Falls Out—Job

"But I'll keep my head up high / although I'm kinda tired
My gal just up and left last week / Friday I got fired
You know it's almost funny / But things can't get worse than now
So I'll keep on trying to sing / But please, just don't ask me how"

There is a point in the valley of suffering where the losses accumulate so quickly that it becomes almost surreal. You lose the job, the relationship fractures, the health diagnosis comes back cold, and you find yourself standing in the wreckage of your own life, exhausted beyond words. In those moments, faith is stripped of all its glossy, Sunday-morning platitudes. It becomes a matter of pure, stubborn survival—a quiet determination to keep your head up.

The patriarch Job knew the exact coordinates of this dark landscape.

In a single, devastating day, the bottom completely fell out of Job's world. Messengers arrived back-to-back, each bearing a new catastrophe. He lost his vast wealth, his livelihood, and most agonizingly, all of his children. Soon after, his physical health collapsed into agonizing disease. Job was emotionally drained, physically broken, and surrounded by the ashes of his former life.

Many Christians today quietly walk through these same ruins, carrying hidden discouragements, failing health, or shattered families. They feel the pressure to put on a brave face, to "sing loudly" through the storm. But Job's story gives us permission to be tired. It shows us that true faith doesn't mean pretending it doesn't hurt.

Job wept, he shaved his head, and he sat in the dust. Yet, in the very depths of his sorrow, when things literally could not get worse, he uttered one of the most defiant declarations of faith ever recorded in the King James Version: *"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him..."* (Job 13:15).

Job didn't know the cosmic backstory of his suffering, and he certainly didn't know *how* his story would end. He couldn't sing a joyful song, but he chose to keep his eyes fixed on his Creator. He held onto the reality that God does not abandon us when the song turns into a groan. As the Psalmist later comforted: *"The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit"* (Ps 34:18).

Faith is not about having a flawless performance or an enthusiastic melody when the world is crumbling. Sometimes, faith is simply the quiet, gritty decision to keep breathing, to keep trusting, and to move forward an inch at a time until your strength returns. You don't have to explain *how* you're going to make it through—you just have to trust the One who is holding you in the dark.

Prayerful Thought

Father, when the bottom completely falls out and my strength is utterly spent, hold me close in the dark. Even when I cannot find the words to sing, let my quiet determination to move forward be a testimony of my unwavering trust in You.

Epilogue

The journey through the changing seasons of life is a road we all must travel. Whether we find ourselves in the hidden wilderness with David, the isolated dungeon with Joseph, the reflective twilight of Solomon, or the devastating ashes of Job, the message of the "cycles" remains the same. The peaks and valleys are not random, nor are they a sign that we have been abandoned.

The people we have encountered in these pages faced the absolute limits of human endurance. They felt the heavy urge to hide under the covers, they watched their dreams lie unfulfilled, they counted the costs of their foolish years, and they stood when the bottom completely fell out. Yet, in every single instance, they found a quiet, gritty strength to continue trusting God.

They realized a truth that changes how we view every hardship: the turbulent seasons of life are not evidence that God has forgotten us. Instead, they are a gentle, persistent reminder that this broken world was never meant to be our final home. We are just passing through.

When the frost of winter bites deep, we can rest in the absolute certainty that the cycle will turn. Winter inevitably gives way to spring. Tears eventually give way to laughter and joy. The darkest night must always yield to the brightness of the morning. Through every shifting season and every unexpected storm, God remains unshakeably faithful.

The prophet Jeremiah captured this eternal baseline of hope in the book of Lamentations, writing in the King James Version: *"It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness"* (Lam 3:22–23).

When you feel down and out, and when you can't even begin to explain *how* you will keep singing, look past the immediate season. Anchor your heart in His daily mercies. The clock keeps ticking, the earth keeps turning, and the Creator of the seasons is holding you securely through them all.